

**Gettysburg Montessori Charter School
Board of Trustees Official Minutes
November 29, 2018**

Board Members Present

Jill Clinton, Chair
Becky Uppercue, Vice Chair
Diana Williams, Treasurer
Melissa Ring, Secretary
Tish Weikel, Member At-Large

Board Members Absent

Lieucetia Swain, Member At-Large

Others Present

Dr. Faye Pleso, CEO
Rose Thornberry

Executive Session

The Board met for executive session at 6:01pm to discuss student and employee related issues, which if conducted in public would violate a lawful privilege or would lead to a disclosure of information confidentially protected by law. Executive session closed at 6:04pm.

Call to Order

Jill Clinton called the meeting to order at 6:04pm

Introductions

None

Approval of Consent Agenda

Becky Uppercue made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. Diana Williams seconded the motion. The Consent Agenda was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No comment

Old Business

No old business

Report of the Chair

The Chair reported that Charter Choices continues to work with the Board to develop reference binders for all Board members including expectations, standard roles and practices to be performed by the Board Members. These will be presented to the Board by Jesse Bean of Charter Choices at the December meeting.

The chair reminded the Board of the policy which requires all handouts for the meeting to be forwarded to GASD along with all Board materials.

The Chair confirmed the next Newsletter is not due out until February

Melissa Ring, Board Secretary, gave a recap of her attendance at the staff meeting on November 27, 2018. She reported the staff worked together to improve fire drills, schedules, and how to connect families in need with additional outside resources for the Holiday season. She also invited teachers and staff to attend the Board Meeting scheduled for November 29, 2018.

Per Dr. Faye Pleso, the next staff meeting in December may be shortened or canceled due to schoolwide events, so the next meeting that a Board member will attend will be in January. Jill Clinton will represent the Board at that meeting, followed by Diana Williams in February. Subsequent assignments will be determined at the January meeting.

The Chair asked Dr. Pleso and the Building Committee for clarification regarding whether renovations will be included in the building project or not. Dr. Pleso will look into the matter and discuss with the architect, Digsau Associates.

Becky Uppercue will present the Parent Survey Results at the December Board meeting.

Rose Thornberry was sworn in as a new member of the Board of Trustees. She replaced A.J. Warner, who resigned from his seat before his term expired. Rose Thornberry's position is up for re-election in May 2019.

Melissa Ring has resigned her position of Secretary of the Board as of December 31, 2018. Diana made the motion to appoint Rose Thornberry will be the new Secretary of the Board as of January 1, 2019. Becky seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote. Dr. Pleso will work to get Rose a Board email account as well as bonded. Her electronic signature is on file and Megan Parks will update her biography on the Board's page on the GMCS website.

The Chair called for a review of members' roles on committees and advised updates.

A motion was made by Tish Weikel to replace Jill Clinton on the Governance Committee with Melissa Ring. Diana Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The committees are as follows:

Executive-

Jill Clinton, Chair
Becky Uppercue, Vice Chair
Diana Williams, Treasurer
Rose Thornberry, Secretary (as of January 1, 2019)

Finance-

Becky Uppercue
Diana Williams

Personnel-

Melissa Ring
Diana Williams
Tish Weikel

Governance-

Tish Weikel
Lieucetia Swain
Melissa Ring

Building Committee (rotating attendance of 2 members)-

Jill Clinton
Diana Williams
Melissa Ring

Administrator's Report

Faye Pleso informed the Board that enrollment is currently at 223 students.

Faye shared that she is working with a grant writer, Natasha Goldman, to apply for the Hoffman Foundation Grant. The writer is tasked with creating a comprehensive document for GMCS that Faye will be able to use to assist in additional grant applications going forward.

Faye gave a full review of our PSSA scores. The state has changed their rubric and there are no more benchmarks for schools. There are now three areas with a state standard set at 80% proficiency. This resulted in a very different picture from last year when we dramatically improved to a score of 72. Faye feels our school's test scores are very low in Math, with 29% reaching the 'proficient' or 'advanced' level. In ELA, our school had 60% 'proficient' or 'advanced', and in Science, it was 65% reaching 'proficient' or 'advanced' levels. Based on these scores, Faye researched methods other underperforming schools and found that strong leadership and a cohesive team is the key to turning around low scores. She feels confident that GMCS has these ingredients and in addition, she thinks the new Eureka math curriculum, RtI program, expanded professional development, more robust special education instruction, added support staff,

and a new handwriting curriculum (as the PSSAs score a 'zero' if an answer is illegible) will all work in concert to improve our scores in the spring.

Faye also expressed concern about how much the 'summer slide' (academic loss over the summer months) affects the staff's abilities to bring the students back to where they should be. She feels an inordinate amount of time at the beginning of the school year is devoted bringing students back to where they left off in May/June. She is currently investigating the costs and logistics associated with having an academic summer camp. This would not only help returning students, but also incoming Kindergarteners who may have limited pre-school experience. She feels that this would also be very positive benefit for returning families, but also a way for prospective families to see what GMCS is all about.

Faye presented an overview of a new program called Safe To Say Something, a statewide effort to improve security and encourage people to report suspicious behavior or threats to the school. A team of school staff will be created to monitor and report any tips to the appropriate authorities and take any necessary action that is called for under the initiative.

Faye shared her experience at a recent Montessori Training retreat in Altoona. It was fairly disappointing to her that many of the relevant panels were canceled. She was able to share Montessori education knowledge and experiences with other attendees. The Board was pleased that Dr. Pleso took the initiative to attend this conference.

Faye reported that the school collected approximately \$150 at our first outing at the Gettysburg Giving Spree. This was a worthwhile event and she learned a lot about ways to improve our showing next year. She remarked that Mrs. Wojnarski has received an overwhelming response to a request for students to sing at an upcoming Ruritan Club event, where Dr. Pleso is now a member. There will be almost 60 students entertaining club members and families at their annual holiday event!

Faye recommended hiring Sarah Pumfrey as a PCA at \$14.50/hour for less than 30 hours a week with no benefits, retroactive to November 27th. Tish Weikel made a motion to approve. Becky Uppercue seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Finance Committee

Highlights of the November 28th Finance Committee meeting include the \$402k still owed to GMCS from GASD and other school districts. Ryan Schumm from Charter Choices reported that this is more than the typical \$250k, but is due to a short billing cycle – many districts haven't paid by this time of the month. He also noted that 99% of Wolfpack fundraising money has not been spent and we have approximately \$29k in that fund.

Ryan also reported that quarterly goals have been met and that we have 74% of expenses remaining. We have not experienced any major financial changes since October, and we are in a good position.

When discussing long-term priorities, Ryan mentioned that he has had experience with removing modular at VIDA. Faye reported an alarmingly high quote from the modular company we lease the units from – over \$200k – but Faye is getting clarification on this number and will be seeking alternatives if it is far above the \$25k that Ryan believes is reasonable. We will hope to include this as a ‘renovation expense’ within the building loan, but will otherwise have to budget for this. Faye needs to give the company four months’ notice before the end of the lease (July 2021).

The committee also discussed the feasibility of an academic ‘summer camp’ as described in the CEO’s Report. Ryan believes this could be part of a great marketing effort, in addition to a good retention tool for existing families.

Another long-term priority for Faye would be to add a social worker position when we reach approximately 250 students, as she anticipates in academic year 2020-21.

We are looking at a potential \$700k-\$800k surplus this year and may be able to pay the 20% required down payment ourselves.

In addition to the down payment, the USDA needs the school to obtain a line of credit to support the school’s commitment. They encourage working with a local bank to show community support. Faye, with Jesse Bean’s assistance, has started working with Centric Bank from Harrisburg (they have already approved us for \$80k); PNC (we have submitted required paperwork); Charter School Capital (they want to see our student funding invoices); and the Reinvestment Fund (Faye has started paperwork).

Although we have still not received a green light from the USDA, Ryan feels that because our budgets have been favorable for the last three years, we are in a good position to receive approval.

We still have six requirements to meet for the USDA, which Faye is planning to complete by the middle to the end of February:

- Environmental review.
- Feasibility study
- Architect feasibility reports.
- Proof of insurance.
- Preliminary plans and specs from the architect
- Legal services agreements

Governance Committee

No update at this time.

Building Committee

Faye will forward a copy of the Digsau agreement to the Board for review. A vote will take place at the December meeting. Our attorney has reviewed and approved the contract. It includes the architect's responsibilities, scope of services, copyright licenses, and claims and disputes language.

A correction was made to the number of classrooms needed in the new build from 10 to 11.

Dr. Pleso will check with the USDA and Digsau to see how much renovation work to the existing building will be included in the scope of work.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair Jill Clinton at 7:35pm